

Meijers Committee Conference 'Ethnic data registration under EU law' – 4 November 2024

In academic and policy circles, diverse perspectives exist regarding the registration and collection of ethnic data. Advocates argue that capturing such data is crucial for addressing inequality, rectifying disparities, and combating discrimination effectively. Conversely, opponents contend that ethnic data registration may yield adverse outcomes for individuals involved, with discrimination as a consequence. On November 4th, the Meijers Committee will host the online conference "Ethnic Data Registration under EU Law".

The conference aims to facilitate knowledge exchange among EU and national policymakers, academics, and other practitioners in the field of ethnic data registration, enabling them to glean insights from each other's experiences. It will explore ways to collect equality data while mitigating and preventing the negative consequences related to discrimination and privacy. Additionally, the conference will provide an overview of existing EU and Member State initiatives to ensure strategic alignment and progress in this area.

In this context, there is a clear need from various sides to collect equality data to assess whether there has been discrimination. The conference aims to address the types of safeguards that could be implemented to protect individuals if it were decided to collect data on ethnicity. Specifically, the conference will seek to answer the following questions:

- How to decide which people will be registered (can and should a distinction between ethnic groups be made without categorization/discrimination)?
- Who should manage the databases on ethnic data (e.g., private sector or public sector bodies)?
- How to prevent exchange of ethnic data?
- Is it possible to anonymise the equality data effectively?
- What are the potential risks of collecting data on ethnicity and how to deal with these in practice, e.g. such as database management issues, privacy violations, increased discrimination and stigmatisation of certain groups, inaccurate data collection, misuse of data, lack of anonymisation, and function creep?

Programme

2:00 PM - 2:10 PM	Opening by chair of the day dr. Karin de Vries – member of the Meijers Committee
2:10 PM - 3:10 PM	Keynote speeches
2:10 PM - 2:40 PM	Wojciech Wiewiórowski - EDPS director
2:40 PM - 3:10 PM	Linnet Taylor - Prof. International Data governance Tilburg Institute of Law, Technology and Society
3:10PM - 3:40 PM	Break
3:40PM - 5:00 PM	Panel discussion in response to keynote speeches, interactive with the audience - led by Meijers Committee member prof. Frederik Zuiderveen Borgesius, with the following speakers: - Hielke Hijmans, prof. at Vrije Univeriteit Brussel, President of the Litigation Chamber and Member Executive Board of the Belgian Data Protection Author - Lina Mechbal European Network against Racism (ENAR) - Lilla Farkas - European Network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination. - Daris Lewis - Legal and Policy Officer at Equinet.
5:00 PM - 5:15 PM	Wrap-up by chair

Location: ONLINE via Teams

(the link to access the conference will be shared with you via email)

List of speakers for keynote and panel session

Wojciech Wiewiórowski (keynote)

Wojciech Wiewiórowski is the European Data Protection Supervisor. He was appointed by a joint decision of the European Parliament and the Council on 5 December 2019 for a term of five years. Before his appointment, he served as Assistant European Data Protection Supervisor from 2014 to 2019 and as Inspector General for the Protection of Personal Data at the Polish Data Protection Authority, a position which he had held since 2010. He was also Vice Chair of the Working Party Article 29 Group.

Linnet Taylor (keynote)

Linnet Taylor is a Professor of International Data Governance at the Tilburg Institute for Law, Technology, and Society (TILT). Her research focuses on the use of new sources of digital data in governance and research around issues of human and economic development. She was previously a Marie Curie research fellow in the University of Amsterdam's International Development faculty, and a postdoctoral researcher at the Oxford Internet Institute. She holds a DPhil in International Development from the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

Hielke Hijmans (panel)

Prof Dr Hielke Hijmans is President of the Litigation Chamber and Member Executive Board of the Belgian Data Protection Authority. On part time basis he is Professor at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB, Institute European Studies).

Lina Mechbal (panel)

Lina Mechbal joined ENAR as the Equal@Work Advisor (Employment, Diversity, Inclusion) in 2023. With a profound passion for promoting equity and combatting discriminations, Lina has gained expertise in the field of employment. Prior to joining ENAR, she worked at the Laboratoire de l'Égalité, a French think tank specializing in gender equity in the workplace. During her time at the Laboratoire de l'Égalité, Lina played a pivotal role in coordinating research groups and fostering collaborations with the private and public sectors, academia, and various associations. She produced a toolkit on unpaid caregivers in the workplace, contributing to practical solutions for gender-based challenges.

Daris Lewis (panel)

Daris Lewis works as a Legal and Policy Officer at Equinet. He started his career at a law firm in the U.S. and moved on to work as a lawyer in the solar energy field. After this corporate experience, he provided legal aid to refugees as well as raised awareness on equality and non-discrimination at NGOs working on human rights in Greece and Spain. He graduated

from the Faculty of Law of University of Sevilla in Spain. He also holds a LL.M. degree in Public International Law and Human Rights from Utrecht University in The Netherlands.

Lilla Farkas (panel)

Lilla Farkas is the race ground coordinator of the European Network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination. Lilla Farkas has been a member of the Budapest Bar Association since 1998. She has worked for domestic and international human rights NGOs on asylum, immigration, criminal justice and discrimination, being engaged in desegregation litigation between 2004 and 2014. She served as president of the Hungarian Equal Treatment Authority's Advisory Board between 2005 and 2011. Once a senior country expert for the Fundamental Rights Agency, she is now senior legal policy analyst for the Migration Policy Group, serving as the race (Roma) ground coordinator of the European network of legal experts on gender equality and non-discrimination (since 2005). She holds an LLM from King's College, London and a PhD in Law from the EUI.